

MACAULAY'S USE OF AUTHORITIES

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James the Second, to a similar scrutiny, it would appear that Burnet was far indeed from being the most inexact writer of his time,¹

In any attempt to estimate the value of a statement in the History of My Own Time, it is necessary to compare the printed version with the original version, written many years earlier, most of which has been preserved. This Macaulay did not fail to do, and he seems to have been the first historian to use the original version to check the other. He terms the original version ' some memoirs written soon after the Revolution ', and describes it as follows :

These memoirs will be found in a manuscript volume, which is part of the Harleian Collection, and is numbered 6584. They are, in fact, the first outlines of a great part of Burnetts History of His Own Times. The dates at which the different portions of this most curious and interesting book were composed are marked. Almost the whole was written before the death of Mary, Burnet did not begin to prepare his History of William's Reign for the press till ten years later. By that time his opinions, both of men and of things, had undergone considerable changes. The value of the rough draft is therefore very great: for it contains some facts which he afterwards thought it advisable to suppress, and some judgments which he afterwards saw cause to alter. I must own that I generally like his first

thoughts best. Whenever his History is reprinted, it ought to be carefully collated with this volume.²

In the interval between the writing of the two versions, Burnet had changed his opinion on many points, both as to men and measures. For instance, as Macaulay points out, he inserted in the first narrative 'an animated panegyric'

*II, 826 (vii).

² III, 1329-30 (xi). These memories were edited by Miss H. C. Foxcroft and published in 1902 as A Supplement to Burnet's History of My Own Time.